Nauruan Avertive Construction

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1. Introduction

This is a text-based study of an aspect of Nauruan grammar that relies on publications in Nauruan dating mainly to the first half of the 20th Century. Any developments in contemporary Nauruan are only briefly touched on as it is not within the scope of the present study.

Nauruan is a Micronesian[1] language confined to the island of Nauru (an independent republic since 1968), though there are small communities of Nauruans in other countries.

It is to be noted that the Nauruan reflected in the 1918 Bible and the 1976 New Testament are taken as valid representations of different registers of spoken Nauruan during the first half of the 20th Century.

The 1918 Bible was a culmination of 19 years of translation work by the American Protestant missionary Philip Adam Delaporte whose mother-tongue was German, having been born in Worms, Germany.

Delaporte arrived on Nauru in 1899 and set about learning Nauruan and was helped in his translation endeavours by a number of Nauruans, notably Timothy Detudamo (later Head Chief of Nauru), Jacob Aroi (later Pastor and educator), and Deireragea (later Chief of Anibare District).[2]

Apart from short periods of furlough, Delaporte was resident on Nauru from 1899 until he was excluded from returning to Nauru in 1915 while on furlough in the U.S.A. as he was viewed as a German sympathizer. He was in the U.S.A., along with Timothy Detudamo, to complete the translation work and to arrange for the printing of the Bible in the U.S.A.

The 1976 New Testament is attributed to the Roman Catholic missionary Alois Kayser, who served as a missionary to the Nauruan people between 1902 and his death due to mistreatment by Japanese military authorities in 1944. He was absent for a brief period during WWI when he was required to leave Nauru by the Australian occupying forces as he held a German passport – Nauru having been a German colony between 1888 and 1914. As an Alsatian, his citizenship status was German until 1918, then, when Alsace-Lorraine reverted to French control, he became a French citizen. He was recognized as an expert on the Nauruan language and all things Nauruan.[3] His is the 1937 A Nauruan Grammar (apparently handed to the Nauru Administration in 1936).

On this basis, I am of the mind that the 1976 New Testament was actually ready for publication prior to the occupation of Nauru by the Japanese in 1942.

There is uncertainty about the dialect situation on Nauru prior to German annexation. What is known is that in pre-colonial days there were two alliances, splitting the island into a northern alliance centered on Ewa (which included at the time what are now Nibok, Uaboe, Baitsi, Ewa, Anetan, Anabar, Ijuw, and half of Anibare districts), and a southern alliance centered on Meneng (which included at the time what are now half of Anibare, Meneng, Yaren, Boe, Buada, Aiwo, and Buada districts), while Denigomodu usually allied itself to Buada.[4] Whether this split was also manifested in a dialectal way is not known.

It is of interest that Delaporte set up his mission in the pre-colonial southern alliance area (Orro hamlet being situated in present day Boe district), while the Catholic mission that Kayser joined was located in the pre-colonial northern alliance area (Ana hamlet being situated in present Ewa district). So if there were dialectal peculiarities based on the pre-colonial alliance areas, these may have been reflected in the Nauruan of Delaporte and Kayser.

Nauruan does not at present have an official orthography, so citations are mainly given in the writing system of the original source.

2. Abbreviations used.

1	First Person
2	Second Person
3	Third person
S	Singular
D	Dual
T	Trial
P	Plural
EXC	Exclusive
INC	Inclusive
ADV	Adverbial prefix
AB	Absolute Marker/Nominal Prefix
ANIM	Animate
APPL	Applicative
CAUS	Causative Prefix
CF	Contrafactual
CL	Classifier
COM	Comitative/Instrumental Suffix
COMM	Command
COMP	Completive Aspect
CONS	Construct Suffix
DAT	Dative
DEP	Dependent Form of Personal Pronoun
DIR	Directional
DIR1 – *eda/ida* upwards, out of, from DIR2 – *ädu/edu* downwards, in, back DIR3 – *ata* out, from within, upwards DIR4 – *atu* in,downwards DIR5 – *oda* steady movement forwards DIR6 – *odu* steady movement backwards DIR7 – *ruwei/ruweij/ruweiy* towards the speaker DIR8 – *n* general directional DIR9 – *w* general directional	
DIST	Distal
E	Emphatic Prefix
FAC	Factitive Prefix
GPOS	General Possessive Classifier
GER	Gerundive
HS	Nauru 2007 Femographic and Health
IMM	Immediative Marker
INDF	Indefinite Pronoun
IND	Indipendent Form of Personal Pronoun
INTENS	Intensifier
LOC	Locative Prefix
MED	Medial
MOD	Modal Aspect marker
MUT	Be in mutual familial relationship
NE	Non-Emphatic Prefix
NEG	Negative Marker
NP	Numeral Particle
Nuw	Nuwawit testament obuä
NuwNT	Nuwawit testament etimeduw
OBJ	Objective Form of Personal Pronoun Suffix
OP	Optative
PERF	Perfective Aspect Suffix
POS	Possessive Personal Pronoun Suffix
PREI	Pre-Inceptive Marker
PROG	Progressive Aspect Marker
PROX	Proximal
RED	Reduplicated Form of Verb
RPOS	Relative Possessive Classifier
SUCC	Successful Outcome Suffix
SUP	Superlative function
Tag	Quenstion Tag
TEMP	Temporal Marker
UNR	Unrealized Aspect Marker
VNI	Velar Nasal ingression
1976	Nuwawit Testament Etimeduw 1976
NG	Nauru Grammar 1936/A Nauruan Grammar 1937

All Bible quotations without 1976 alongside the citation, are taken from the 1918 Bible. PC= personal communication.

3. Avertive Function

Avertive has been defined as the "non-realization of once imminent, past verb situation"[5] and in English is usually marked by constructions such as

almost + V
nearly + V
scarcely + V

The Nauruan Avertive Construction is based on the verb root *eniy : enij*, which on its own approximates to "be near to give out, be hard pressed".

4. Use of *eniy/enij* as an Independent Verb

Its use as an independent verb can be seen in the following examples:

1.
me eyida engit[6,7] eran[8,9] magit[6,10] oaeo eow imago me mamaeduwangen[11,12]
& .DEP+rise.up wind INDF+CL30[3] end+CONS power DIR LOC+sea & bend+RED+DIR2+DIR9+to+VNI+PERF
ura[13] mungana[14,15] bagobagan me ro eniy kor nunginung[16] Lu 8:23 1976
3P.OBJ NE+MED.P wave & 3P.DEP hard.pressed INTENS SUP
And a most powerful wind arose at sea and the waves then repeatedly broke down onto them and they were extremely near to giving out

2.
t'eo[17] ta baruen beta[18] eune[19] ngun[20] oreit eniy,
only+NEG only serve+1P.INC.POS PROX E+ PROG hard.pressed
me inan obabaka[21] pwanen[22] Ac 19:27 1976
& UNR FAC+bad+RED speak+3S.GER
it is not just this service [trade] of ours that is hard pressed but its reputation will be reproached

3.
A enij iow iat[6] ekaw, A enij
1S.DEP hard,pressed DIR in+3S.POS AB+stream 1S.DEP hard.pressed
iow itũrit[6,23] amen abab ñame,
DIR by+3.SPOS male+CONS smite+RED person
A enij iow itũrin[6] amen ũbwiõ, A enij iow itũrin heiden,
1S.DEP hard.pressed DIR by+3S.POS male+CONS home+1S.POS 1S.DEP hard.pressed DIR by+3S.POS Gentiles,
A enij iow iat[24] tekawa, A enij iow eat[6] etomagage,
1S.DEP hard.pressed DIR in+3S.POS city 1S.DEP hard.pressed DIR on+3S.POS AB+wilderness
A enij iow imago, A enij iow itũrit[6] edetsini[25]
1S.DEP hard.pressed DIR LOC+sea 1S.DEP hard.pressed DIR by+3S.POS sibling+RED+MUT
n[24] tabaite[26] 2Co11:26
CONS only+lie
I was hard pressed by streams, I was hard pressed by smiters of men, I was hard pressed by kin, I was hard pressed by Gentile, I was hard pressed in cities, I was hard pressed in the wilderness, I was hard pressed at sea, I was hard pressed by false brothers

4.
me r änijen ökör ngaga[27], bue Gott o kamarar
& 3P.DEP hard.pressed+PERF INTENS TEMP+MED for God 3S.DEP think
bue e nüm öekäow ökör monibaiüra in[6] ekäow morin Nuw76:1
for 3S.DEP MOD FAC+be.not+DIR INTENS rule+3P.POS CONS be.not.DIR mind+3S.POS
they had truly given out at that time for God thought that he should really bring to nothing their mindless rulership

5.
eo eniy tuk mingin
NEG hard.pressed yet drunk+3S.POS
he's not near to giving up yet his drinking to excess PC

5. Avertive - Usual Construction .

The usual construction is *eniy/enij + & + V + PERF*

Examples:

6.
me enij mõ õmwareowen nanõ, nij [sic] mõ õmwareowen
& hard.pressed & slip+PERF foot+1S.POS hard.pressed & slip+PERF
aeõ[39] dũgidugo Ps73:2
GPOS+1S.POS walk
and my foot had almost slipped, my step had almost slipped

7.
enij mõ rõ õekeowõt[6,28] atsin eat[6] eb Ps119:87
hard.pressed & 3P.DEP FAC+be.not+DIR+1S.OBJ+PERF from+3S.POS on+3S.POS land
they had almost made me to not exist from the earth

8.
me ãe õnũetet emago ñea[20] ouwak me enij mõ õnũetet itũbañ ñea eb Am 7:4
& fire consume+PERF AB+sea E+MED big & hard.pressed & consume+PERF AB+portion E+MED land
and it devoured the great sea, and it had almost eaten up the land portion

9.
re tũ mo ro oquen mũraõa[29] dobot me ñagan enij mõ rõ baron Lu 5:7
3P.DEP come & 3P.DEP fill NE+two+CLMED boat & therefore hard.pressed & 3P.DEP sink+PERF
they came and filled both the boats and therefore they had almost sunk

10.
me oren ngabuna[30] me ro okwon muraoa[29] ekwo,
& come+PERF E+ANIM.P+MED & 3P.DEP fill NE+two+MED AB+vessel
ouge bwe eniy me re beduyowen Lu 5:7 1976
say for hard.pressed & 3P.DEP sink+PERF
and those ones then came and they filled both the vessels so that they had almost sunk

11.
me eniy me ro dairinaiyan kor ngaga me ta ura re tadorereiy[26]
& hard.pressed & 3P.DEP mad+PERF INTENS TEMP+MED & only 3P.IND 3P.DEP only+talk+APPL
angogen bita imin re nim riring a wong Jesus Lu 6:11 1976
concerning+3S.POS NE+MED AB+thing 3P.DEP MOD do to SUCC Jesus
and they had almost gone mad at that time and they talked one with the other concerning the thing they might successfully do to Jesus

12.
mi iju aigetow mõ õbaron wañara[39] dobot me enij mõ rõ gatũraen Lu 8:23
& more somewhat & sink+PERF GPOS+3P.POS boat & hard.presssed & 3P.DEP accident+PERF
and just a little more and their boat had sunk and they almost had an accident

13.
me ean mũñane[15] eñõg, enij me ar eõ konaet[6] erewit[6] eñame
& on+3S.POS NE+PROX AB+word hard.pressed & 3D.DEP NEG able+PERF AB+restrain AB+person
atsin ean aũra[39] ere iwim a ũrõr Ac 14:18
from+3S.POS on+3S.POS GPOS+3P.POS extend AB+sacrifice to 3D.OBJ
and by these words, they both had almost not got to restrain the people from their offering to the two of them sacrifices

14.
ã[31] õgõg amune[32] eow itũrit[24] dei Judea, me enij
3S.DEP hold male+PROX DIR by+3S.POS people+of Judea & hard.pressed
me ra abien Ac23:27
& 3P.DEP slay+PERF
this man was seized by the people of Judea and they had almost killed him

15.
eniy me wo mwaneiywoten[33,34] burio[35] ia a nim eke anga
hard.pressed & 2S.DEP wise+APPL+SUCC+PERF innards+1S.POS COND 1S.DEP MOD make 1S.IND
bet christian ion Act 26:28 1976
also Christian INDF
you had almost successfully persuaded me that I should become a Christian too

16.
me ñag ama baraw ama duoku eat[6] ibũm ebak,
& TEMP+ 1P.EXC.DEP sail 1P.EXC.DEP delay on+3S.POS AB+day 3S.DEP+numerous
bwe enij ma ama eõ baiweten[36] itañin Knitus Ac 27:7
for hard.pressed & 1P.EXC.DEP NEG reach+PERF alongside+3S.POS Knit
and when we sailed, we delayed for many days, for we had almost not reached Cnitus

17
me enij ma ama eõ oden itañin Acts 27:8
& hard.pressed & 1P.EXC.DEP NEG pass+PERF by+3S.POS
and we almost had not passed alongside it

18.
me enij ma ama eõ konaet[6] ijida dobot Acts 27:16
& hard.pressed & 1P.EXC.DEP NEG able+PERF tie.up boat
and we almost had not been able to tie up the boat

19.
bwa a[37] arak õkõr me enij me e man Phil 2:27
for - sick INTENS & hard.pressed & 3S.DEP die+PERF
for he was very sick and he had almost died

20.
bwe enij me e man bwe dõgin an[39] makur Kristo Phill 2:30
for hard.pressed & 3S.DEP die+PERF for reason+3S.POS GPOS+3S.POS work Christ
for he had almost died on account of the work of Christ

21.
me enij ma A paten[6] bwe era õdereder imin memak
& hard.pressed & 1S.DEP speak+PERF for AB+blood FAC+clean AB+thing all
tekei añõgetow[6] He 9:22
like concerning+3S.POS+DIR
and I had almost spoken of it that blood makes clean all things like according to it (i.e. the Mosaic Law Code)

22.
me Gott eijida eñit[6] eran e togit[6] oaeo me änij meona[38]
& God 3S.DEP+raise.up AB+wind INDF+CL30[3] 3S.DEP end+CONS power & hard.pressed NE+CL12[5]+MED
me bädueowen Nuw 68:2
& sink+PERF
and God stirred up a most powerful wind and that boat had almost sunk

23.
ñaga amea priester o kaijöt ñana Antiochus ömädomädoiet tempel
TEMP+MED male+MED priest 3S.DEP hear E+MED.P Antiochus FAC+oppress+RED+PERF temple
me ñana änij me ekäowen okor an[39] mogur amea Gott ñea iduön
& E+MED.P hard.pressed & be.not+DIR+PERF INTENS GPOS+3S.POS work male+MED God E+MED AB+true
me ouwak okor anüñenüñ an[39] muijiña Nuw87:1
& big INTENS SUP GPOS+3S.POS sorrow
when the priest heard that Antiochus had defiled the temple and that he had almost brought to nothing the work of the true God, his grief was exceedingly great

24.
me ro gonaet ijü ñan ebak me änij me o bakoron
& 3P.DEP able+PERF fish E+P+ 3 S.DEP+numerous & hard.presssed & 3S.DEP break+PERF
wañara[39] iuw NuwNT19:2
GPOS+3P.POS net
and they had caught many fish and their net had almost broken apart

25.
amärumena[40] ör jän me o quötiro ijü müraoa[29] eoquo
male+two+MED 3D.DEP draw.in & 3S.DEP fill+SUP fish NE+two+CL12[5]+MED AB+vessel
me änij me re bädueowen NuwNT19:3
& hard.pressed & 3P.DEP sink+PERF
those two men drew in (their nets) and those two boats filled to the brim with fish and they almost had sunk

26.
me ñaga re mäg imago me eijida eñit eran oaeo
& TEMP+MED 3P.DEP dwell LOC+sea & 3S.DEP+raise.up AB+wind INDF+CL.30 strong
me müñana ebogobagan r eö togi n ta ijimodu a oquona
& NE+MED.P AB+wave 3P.DEP NEG end CONS only overflow to vessel+MED
me änij me re bädueowen NuwNT29:1
& hard.pressed & 3P.DEP sink+PERF
and when the were at sea a strong wind was stirred up and those waves did not stop overflowing to that boat and they almost sunk

6. Avertive with Successful Outcome Suffix

Where the Avertive construction includes the Successful Outcome particle *wong/wõñ* , the Perfective Aspect suffix *-en* can be omitted:

27.
me ngag or oraiy ngeiyina[40] me eniy me or eo dug wong engame
& TEMP+ 3D.DEP utter E+CL11[7]+MED & hard.preseed & 3D.DEP NEG hinder SUCC AB+person
ia re ere a uror iwuim ion Ac14:18[17] 1976
COND 3P.DEP extend to 3D.OBJ AB+sacrifice INDF
and when they both uttered that saying, both almost did not successfully restrain the people when they offered a sacrifice to the two of them

28.
me ngaga ebwaken mungana ama bum in ta duwoku eow imago
& TEMP+MED 3S.DEP+many NE+MED.P GPOS+1P.EXC.POS day CONS only delay DIR LOC.sea
me ngaga eniy me ama eo eagada wong ina mwimwin Gnidos
& TEMP+MED hard.pressed & 1P.EXC.DEP NEG reach SUCC there border+RED+CONS Cnidos
dogin engin ngaran[41] e dug kama Ac 27:7 1976
reason+3S.POS wind E+CL30[3]+ 3S.DEP hinder 1P.EXC.OBJ
and when the days of our delay at sea had become many and we had almost not succeeded in reaching there, the borders of Cnidos, because of the wind that hindered us

29.
me ama ta rengoduwa ebe eben[8,42] eoning, ngabena[43] Cauda egen,
& 1P.EXC.DEP only go.down.+DIR9+to land INDF+CL10[15] AB+small E+CL10[15]+MED Cauda name+3S.POS
me eniy me ama eo bet eibawong miona dobot Acts 27:16 1976
& hard.pressed & 1P.EXC.DEP NEG also seize+SUCC NE+CL12[5]+MED boat
and we went down to the small land, that land called Cauda, and we also almost did not successfully hold on to [controlled] the boat

30.
me tin ia eniy me r eo timor wong ngabuna eimwi deidein
& COND hard.pressed & 3P.DEP NEG live SUCC E+ANIM.P+MED right behaviour+3S.POS
ri nan meta eow i ngabuna eko God turura me ngabuna
3P.DEP UNR come.out DIR where E+ANIM.P+MED be.not God by+3P.POS & E+ANIM.P+MED
eamet[23] dura? 1Pe 4:18 1976
man+CONS sin
and if those whose ways are righteous almost do not have life, where will those not having God and the sinners make a showing?

7. Avertive with Perfective Aspect Suffix Omitted.

The Perfective Aspect suffix is sometimes omitted (this may be either an irregular speech pattern or a yet-to-be understood grammatical reason):

31.
amebuna juden re ibwa bitune[14,44] engame me eniy
male+ANIM.P+MED Jews 3P.DEP seize NE+PROX AB+person & hard.pressed
me ro abi Ac 23:27 1976
& 3P.DEP slay
those Jews seized this man and they almost killed him.

32.
me tsin ie enij me e eõ õtsimor ñabũn omo, inan meta i
& COND hard.pressed & - NEG FAC+live E+ANIM.P+ 3S.DEP+good UNR go.out where
ñabũna re eõ auwã Gott õa ñabũn ebaka? 1 Pe 4:18
E+ANIM.P.MED 3P.DEP NEG love Gott or E+ANIM.P+ 3S.DEP bad
and if those who are righteous are almost not saved, where will those who do not love God or those evil ones make a showing?

33.
re nim adoreiy bita[14,44] imin ogokoro ngea bwain amo,
3P.DEP MOD worship+APPL NE+MED AB+thing 3S.DEP+run+RED E+MED object+CONS first
ngea eotimorien uiten ngea eniy
E+MED 3S.DEP+FAC+live+PERF wound+3S.POS E+MED hard.pressed
me ema eow ean ngago Re13:12 1976
& 3S.DEP+die DIR on+3S.DEP TEMP+DIST
they should worship the wild beast – the one that is the first one- the one whose wound was healed, the one that had almost died earlier

34.
me damadamen amea Ozias me änij me tamuit ön mürana[9,41,45]
& anger+PERF male+MED Uzziah & hard.pressed & throw COM NEII+CL.30[3]+MED
wanna bait kabo öreita babuiji inibän Nuw74:2
RPOS+3S.POS object+CONS AB+incense PROG hold LOC+hand+3S.POS
and Uzziah was then angry and he almost threw with his incense holder he was holding in his hand

35.
me ri ta muitöñ me änij me r eö gona itüöb ön müñana NuwNT79:2
& 3P.DEP only wonder & hard.pressed & 3P.DEP NEG able faith NEII+MED.P
and they just marvelled and they were almost unable to have faith in those things

8. Avertive in Contrafactual Clauses

The Avertive construction can also be used in contrafactual clauses:

36.
enij ago eñame ion emequõr itũrit ãita agem,
hard.pressed CF AB+person INDF 3S.DEP+lie by+3S.POS female+MED spouse+2S.POS
nat[6,46] agada a gama idũra iot[6,47] atsin itũrũm Ge 26:10
UNR reach to 1P.EXC.OBJ AB+sin INDF from+3S.POS by+2S.POS
had a man almost lain with your wife, a sin would have befallen us from you

37.
kamwen ago ia ama eõ duoku, enij ma aruwõrien[48]
CF 1P.EXC.DEP NEG delay hard.pressed & two+CL35[23]+PERF
ama redõ ñage Ge 43:10
GPOS+1P.EXC.POS return TEMP+PROX
had we not delayed, our returning would have been almost twice now

9. Avertive with NP

There is one instance of *eniy/enij* with the following construction:

eniy/enij + & + NP

Example:

38.
memie re eed me yungomie ro kaiyot bet, ngana teo ta Ephesus
eye+2P.POS 3P.DEP see & ear+2P.POS 3P.DEP hear also E+MED.P only+NEG only Ephesus
bwe eniy me ean atebin ngabena eben Asia memag,
for hard.pressed & on+3S.POS number+CONS E+CL10[15]+MED land+CONS Asia all
me amea Paulus oreit onga mwit engame Ac 19:26 1976
& male+MED Paul PROG persuade AB+person
your eyes see me and your ears hear too, that it is not only Ephesus, for it is almost in the number of the land of all Asia, and Paul was persuading people

10. Contemporary Nauruan Construction

In contemporary Nauruan, one strategy is using the verbal expression *eo goeow* used adverbially - literally 'not far off:

39.
eo goeow me paroy
NEG far & sink
he almost drowned PC

40.
aworit[6,49] egen[5o] am retsin newspaper oa magazine, eo goeow iaran iaran[51] HS
NP+CL35[23] how.many GPOS+2S.POS read newspaper or magazine NEG far morning morning
how many times is your reading a newspaper or magazine, almost daily?

11. Nauru Grammar 1936

In Kayser's *Nauru Grammar* (1936:192), the following construction is rendered as "nearly":

gain tejeij

but no examples are given.

12. Notes

[1] – Micronesian in this paper is used to describe the group of languages sharing the same common ancestor language that developed from the earlier ancestor language referred to as 'Proto-Oceanic' – itself a descendent of the original ancestor language referred to as
'Proto-Austronesian'. The major member languages of the Micronesian group of languages are (alphabetically): Carolinian, Chuukese-Mortlockese, Kiribati, Kosraean, Marshallese, Mwokilese, Nauruan, Pingelapese, Pohnpeian, Puluwatese, Satawalese, Sonsorolese, Ulithian, and Woleaian.

Micronesian, used as a cultural/geographic area, includes (in addition to the above):

(a) the people of Belau, and the Chamorro people of Guam and the Mariana Islands (the languages of these two peoples are more closely related to the languages of the Philippines, and these two peoples appear to have been in-situ far longer than any of the other groups);

(b) the people of Yap (who predated the arrival of the peoples now speaking the Micronesian group of languages, but whose language descended from Proto-Oceanic);

(c) the people of the atolls of Kapingamarangi and Nukuoro, who are members of the Polynesian group of languages (also descended from Proto-Oceanic), who are more recent neighbours.

[2] – Nauru Congregational Church 1887 – 1987, p 12.

[3] – (1) Pacific Islands Monthly, Vol. 11, No. 4, p 21 (1940) (2) Father Alois Kayser and the Recent History of the Nauruan language, *in* Nauru Grammar by Alois Kayser MSC, edited by Karl H.M. Rensch (p I – XIII). Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, ACT, Australia (1993).

[4] - (1) Chiefs of Baitsi, Papers of Camilla Wedgwood, National Library of Australia; (2) Nauru Detudamo 17.II.35, p 10. Papers of Camilla Wedgwood, National Library of Australia; (3) Report on research work in Nauru Island, Central Pacific. Part 1, by Camilla Hildegarde Wedgwood, Camilla Hildegarde. Oceania Vol 6 No 4 p 371 (June 1936)

[5] The grammar of 'non-realization, *in* Studies in Language (December 2019). Tania Kuteva, Bas Aarts, Gergana Popova and Anvita Abbi.

[6] – A feature of Nauruan phonology is denasalization. The general rule is that word final *-n* undergoes denasalization before a high vowel.

This is not seen universally, which may be due to as-yet-unknown factors having to do with stress contours, sentence interruption, free variation, or other factors.

Similarly, if the word final *-n* if followed by a vowel sequence [high vowel+low vowel], and the high vowel is weak stress, the high vowel is usually deleted following denasalization.

[7] – denasalization:

> *engin/eñin + eran > engit/eñit eran*

[8] – All classificatory indefinite pronouns follow the same pattern:

> *e-*
> particle, probably from same origin as the absolute marker/nominal prefix *e-*
> +
> Classifier
> +
> *-n*
> probably a fossilized construct suffix

[9] - *eran* is the Indefinite Pronoun for the Classifier 30[3] *ra* for objects presenting a flat surface or presenting a hollow aspect. *engin/eñin* – wind, is a word that falls into this classificatory division in Nauruan.

[10] – *magin* (*mag*, exhaust/use up + Construct suffix *in*) is used to express the strongest superlative (see NG16).
In this case word final *-n* is followed by two vowels, the first of which is the short vowel e̯ absolute marker/nominal prefix attached to the root *oaeo/oaio* – power, strong; the short vowel e̯ is deleted.

> *magin + e̯oaeo > magit oaeo*

[11] – *mamaeduwangen*

mamaedu is here taken as the reduplicated form of *maedu,* bend downwards (see NG180) which itself is a stem mae + Directional Suffix 2 *idu/edu* - downwards, in, back. *mamaedu* is then followed by Directional Suffix 9 *w* – general directional.

[12] - where the preposition *a* – to, is followed by the Perfective Aspect Suffix *en* , a velar nasal sound is inserted:

a + en > angen

[13] – The Dual, Trial and Plural 3rd person pronouns have the same form acting both as Independent Personal Pronouns and Objective (direct and indirect) Personal Pronouns.

[14] – Nauruan has developed a series of prefixes that are added to the general (basic) demonstratives. These were later expanded to produce fused forms with the classifiers.

There are three non-emphatic prefixes:

min, mit

bit

mu/mũ

There is also one emphatic prefix:

nga/ña

I consider that Nauruan incorporated the Emphatic Prefix *nga/ña* into its demonstrative and personal pronoun system at an early period. The *nga/ña* element is found in disparate parts of the Oceanic family (Kiribati, North Ambrym, Mekeo among others) as an emphasizing or focusing element.

Later, the word *min* – thing, was incorporated into the demonstrative system (the Micronesian[1] language of Satawal has also developed a series of demonstratives incorporating *min* – thing). *mit* is the form produced through the phonological process of denasalization.

I consider *bit* to be a later development of *mit* through the phonological process of pre-stopping.

I consider *mu/mũ* to be the last development as it is fused with the emphatic forms of the general plural demonstratives and this prefix then spread to the classifiers.

All of the demonstratives with non-emphatic or emphatic prefixes have a range of uses, from an almost neutral function, to a demonstrative adjective, to acting as what approximates to a definite article, or as a demonstrative pronoun, or as a relativizer. When used as a relativizer it usually lacks the spatial suffixes. The simple forms are post nominal and are not used a relativizers. The classificatory demonstratives are used with single objects only, plural objects use the plural general demonstratives.

[15] – *mungana*, those things there.

Table 1: *Non-Emphatic mu/mũ Forms of the Simple Plural General Demonstratives.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Plural General Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form	Non-Emphatic *mu/mũ* Form
Proximal (these here)	*ane*	*ngane/ñane*	*mungane/mũñane*
Medial (those there)	*ana*	*ngana/ñana*	*mungana/mũñana*
Distal (those yonder)	*ano*	*ngano/ñano*	*mungano/mũñano*

[16] – *nungenung/nũñinũñ* – draw up, pull up, tie up tightly; it is used as a strong intensifier (see NG16, *ani̲n̍eni̲n̍*)

[17] – *t’eo/deõ* – only+negative particle, is the portmanteau for negative equative clauses.

[18] – *baruen be-/barũenbe-*, is a compound made up of *baru/barũ*, take - and *be-*, hand. It is usually translated as ‘serve, minister’. Maybe the original sense was ‘take one’s hand to put to work’.

[19] – PROX on its own is the abbreviation for the proximal singular form of the general demonstrative. In this case it is the augmented form.

Table 2: *Simple Singular General Demonstratives with Augmented Forms.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Singular General Demonstrative	Augmented Form
Proximal (this here)	*une*	*eune/iune*
Medial (that there)	*ia*	*No form*
Distal (that yonder)	*uno*	*euno/iuno*

Kayser (NG31) assigns the augmented forms only to living beings, but the recorded usage is both to animate and inanimate subjects.

The basic general demonstrative, whether singular, augmented singular, or plural is placed after the noun it qualifies.

[20] – E+ is the abbreviation for *ngun* the emphatic singular form of the simple general demonstrative. In this case it is lacking the usual spatial suffix, indicating it is acting as a relativizer.

Table 3: *Simple General Demonstratives and their Emphatic nga/ña Forms.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Singular General Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal (this here)	*une*	*ngune/ñune*
Augmented form	*eune/iune*	*ngaeune/ñaiune*
Medial (that there)	*ia*	*ngea/ñea*
Augmented form	*No form*	*No form*
Distal (that yonder)	*uno*	*nguno/ñuno*
Augmented form	*euno/iuno*	*ngaeuno/ñaiuno*
Degree of Proximity	Simple Plural General Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal (these here)	*ane*	*ngane/ñane*
Medial (those there)	*ana*	*ngana/ñana*
Distal (those yonder)	*ano*	*ngano/ñano*

[21] - *obabaka/õbabaka* is the reduplicated form of *obaka/õbaka*, make bad (*o̱baka*, NG169). To repeatedly make bad, has a wide range of meanings: insult, revile, reproach, slander, condemn, make worse.

[22] – *pwanen* is analyzed here as 3rd person singular gerundive, 'its being talked of, its reputation'.

[23] – the final *n* undergoes denasalization before the short vowel *e̯*, the absolute marker/nominal prefix attached to *amen* – man+CON; the short vowel *e̯* is deleted:

itũrin e̯amen abab ñame > iturit amen abab ñame

[24] – Regressive Assimilation of final *n*. This is not observed in all circumstances.

ian tekawa > iat tekawa

[25] – *eidedini/edetsini* – reduplicated form of *eidini/etsini*, which originally meant ‘be in relationship of brother and sister of the same tribe’, but is here adapted for a Christian use, ‘Christian brothers and sisters’(see NG176 *edini,* relationship of brother or sister of the same tribe; *ededini,* reduplicated form).

[26] – *ta*, only/just – can be added to any noun or verb with little or no effect on meaning.

[27] – *ngaga/ñaga*, at that time, then, when.

ngaga/ñaga is part of a set of Temporal Markers.

Table 4: *Temporal Markers*

Degree of Proximity	Form
Proximal: present time, at this time, now	*ngage/ñage*
Medial: past time, at that time, then, when	*ngaga/ñaga*
Distal: more remote past time, at that more remote time, then (more remote time), when (more remote time)	*ngago/ñago*

TEMP+ is the abbreviation for the temporal marker *ngag/ñag* with no apparent spatial suffix.

There is a word *ago* that is used in Counterfactual Clauses, so it is possible that the time markers above are fused forms of the emphatic prefix *nga/ña* with a pre-existing time marker *ag*. There is also an adverb *naga* meaning 'directly'(see NG165).

[28] - *õekeowõt*
eko - be not, not exist; *eko* + *eow* Directional > *ekeow*.
Factitive Prefix *o/õ* + *ekeow* > *oekeow/õekeow* – make to not exist, bring to nothing.
õekeow + 1st singular objective suffix *o/õ* > *õekeowõ* – make me to not exist, bring me to nothing.
õekeowõ + Perfective Aspect suffix *en* > *õekeowõn*; denasalization of final n before following high vowel which is then deleted

õekeowõn + *eatsin eat eb* > *õekeowõt atsin eat eb*

[29] – *muraoa/muraõa* Demonstrative Numeral, Classifier 12[5], those two objects of Classifier 12[5].

Classifier 12[5] is used for troughs, canoes, other vessels/craft, and by extension cars and aircraft.

Table 5: *Demonstrative Numeral for one object of Classifier 12[5], eo.*

Number	Simple Form	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form	Non-Emphatic *mu/mũ* Form
This one here	*one*	*ngone*	*mione*
That one there	*ona*	*ngona*	*miona*
That one yonder	*ono*	*ngono*	*miono*

The above table is based on the forms of this demonstrative numeral found in the 1976 New Testament . The Emphatic and Non-Emphatic *mu/mũ* forms are contractions of the set presented in Kayser's *A Nauruan Grammar* (NG44).

Table 6: *Demonstrative Numerals, Classifier 12[5], eo. (Adapted from Kayser’s NG44)*

Numeral	Degree of Proximity	Simple Form	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form	Non-Emphatic *min* Form	Non-Emphatic *mu/mũ* Form
One	Proximal	*one*	*ṅaeone*	*mineone*	*mụeone*
	Medial	*ona*	*ṅaeona*	*mineona*	*mụeona*
	Distal	*ono*	*ṅaeono*	*mineono*	*mụeono*
Two	Proximal	*rao̯e*	*ṅarao̯e*	*minirao̯e*	*mụrao̯e*
	Medial	*rao̯a*	*ṅarao̯a*	*minirao̯a*	*mụrao̯a*
	Distal	*rao̯o*	*ṅarao̯o*	*minirao̯o*	*mụrao̯o*
Three	Proximal	*aijao̯e*	*ṅaijao̯e*	*minaijao̯e*	*mụijao̯e*
	Medial	*aijao̯a*	*ṅaijao̯a*	*minaijao̯a*	*mụijao̯a*
	Distal	*aijao̯o*	*ṅaijao̯o*	*minaijao̯e*	*mụijao̯o*
Four	Proximal	*aeao̯e*	*ṅaeao̯e*	*minaeao̯e*	*mụaeao̯e*
	Medial	*aeao̯a*	*ṅaeao̯a*	*minaeao̯a*	*mụaeao̯a*
	Distal	*aeao̯o*	*ṅaeao̯o*	*minaeao̯o*	*mụaeao̯o*

In the 1918 Bible the Emphatic forms are spelt *ñaeon-* and the Non-Emphatic *mu/mũ* forms are spelt *mion-*.

The original table from NG44 is given below:

Table 7: *Kayser’s Table for Demonstrative Numeral Classifier 12[5].*

Category 5: for Trough-Shaped Objects. Stem: eo.

ṅaeone	mụeone	mineone	one	this 1 here.
ṅaraoe	muraoe	miniraoe	raoe	these 2 here.
ṅaijaoe	mụijaoe	minaijaoe	aijaoe	these 3 here.
ṅaeaoe	mụaeaoe	minaeaoe	aeaoe	these 4 here.
ṅaeotijimeoe	mụeotijimeoe	mineotijimeoe	eotijimeoe	these 5 here.
ṅaeotaoe	mụeotaoe	mineotaoe	eotaoe	these 10 here.
ṅaeorumaeoe	mueorumaeoe	mineorumaeoe	eorumaeoe	these 20 here.
ṅaeotimoeoe	mụeotimoeoe	mineotimoeoe	eotimoeoe	these 30 here.
ṅaeotimaeoe	mụeotimaeoe	mineotimaeoe	eotimaeoe	these 50 here.
ṅaeodumaeoe	mụeodumaeoe	mineodumaeoe	eodumaeoe	these 90 here.
ṅaeotebuiue	mụeotebuiue	mineotebuiue	eotebuiue	these 100 here.
ṅaeorobuiue	mụeorobuiue	mineorobuiue	eorobuiue	these 200 here.
ṅaeotijubuiue	mụeotijubuiue	mineotijubuiue	eotijibuiue	these 300 here.
ṅaeotimoueroe	mụeotimoueroe	mineotimoueroe	eotimoueroe	these 500 here.
ṅaeotijimoueroe	mụeotijimoueroe	mineotijimoueroe	eotijimoueroe	these 500 here.

[30] – *ngabuna/ñabũna* those ones (animate) there

The Animate Plural Marker is *bun/bũn* .

Table 8: *Animate Plural Demonstratives Simple and Emphatic nga/ña Forms.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Form	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal: these many here	*bune*	*ngabune/ñabũne*
Medial: those many there	*buna*	*ngabuna/ñabũna*
Distal: those many yonder, those late ones	*buno*	*ngabuno/ñabũno*

When there is no specifying spatial suffix, this usually signifies that the demonstrative functions as a relativizer.

[31] - *ã* is the orthographic convention for the 3rd person singular dependent pronoun in the 1918 Bible to show that the phrase of which it is part does not refer to an identifiable individual, but is indefinite, *one*, *they*, and in the English translation can often best be rendered by passivizing the phrase.

[32] – *amune*, this male here. This is the fused syncopated gender specific demonstrative, proximal spatial suffix.

The coexistent un-syncopated form is *ametune*.
ametune is composed of *amen*, male marker + *eune*, the augmented form of *une*, singular general demonstrative, proximal spatial suffix.
amen becomes *amet* through denasalization before high vowels, the vowel is then dropped:

amen + eune > *ametune*, syncopated to *amune*

Table 9: *Singular Male Specific Demonstratives.*

Degree of Proximity	Form
Proximal: this male here	ametune
	Syncopated: amune
Medial: that male there	ameta
	Syncopated: amea
Distal: that male yonder, that late male	ametuno
	Syncopated: amuno

[33] – *mwaneiywoten burio* now successfully make wise my heart, persuade me. *mwan/man* – wise, plus Applicative Suffix *eiy/ei > mwaneiy/manei* – make wise by

[34] - When the Success Marker *wong/wõñ* is followed by the Perfective Aspect Suffix e*n*, denasalization occurs:

wong/wõñ + en > woten/wõten

[35] - *burio/bũriõ* innards, heart, one's will.

[36] - *baiweten* now reaches, has reached, then reached
baiwong/baiwõñ reach, arrive at.
Presumably, at one stage this was a verb *bai* + the Success Marker *wong/wõñ*. Denasalization occurs This is when the Perfective Aspect Suffix follows, the same process occurs as at note [34], i.e.

baiwong/baiwõñ + en > baiwoten/baiwõten

baiweten is an alternative spelling/pronunciation.

[37] – The 1918 Bible uses 'dummy' vowels for orthographic purposes. In this instance, the *a* in '*a arak*' is a 'dummy' vowel to indicate that '*arak*' at the head of the VP has a 3rd person singular subject.

[38] – that vessel there; see Note [29].

[39] - Nauruan has two possessive classifiers that must be used in alienable possessive clauses. In broad terms, 'GPOS' is the abbreviation for the general possessive classier, which denotes ownership; and 'RPOS' is the abbreviation for the relative possessive classifier, which denotes usership.

[40] – *amerumena* those two males there.

This is a late augmented form of the number-specific medial demonstrative *rumena* with which it coexists.

rumena is composed of *ru* – two; *amen* – male marker; *(n)a* – medial spatial suffix. At a later stage, *amen* was prefixed to it to reinforce its male meaning.

Table 10: *Augmented Male Demonstrative Numeral.*

Number	Degree of Proximity	Simple Form	Augmented Form
two males	Proximal	*rumene*	*amerumene*
	Medial	*rumena*	*amerumena*
	Distal	*rumeno*	*amerumeno*
three males	Proximal	*yimene/jimene*	*ametimene/ametsimene*
	Medial	*yimena/jimena*	*ametimena/ametsimena*
	Distal	*timeno/jimeno*	*ametimeno/ametsimeno*

[41] – *ngeiyina/ñeijina* – the word there, that word.; the message there, that message.

ngeiyina/ñeijina is composed of *nga/ña* emphatic prefix; *eiyi/eiji* classifier 11[7]; *(n)a* medial spatial suffix.

Classifier 11[7] is used for an individual word, or a complete message/statement/speech.

Table 11: *Simple and Emphatic Forms of Demonstratives for Classifier 11[7], eiyi/eiji.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal	*eiyine/eijine*	*ngeiyine/ñeijine*
Medial	*eiyina/eijina*	*ngeiyina/ñeijina*
Distal	*eiyino/eijino*	*ngeiyino/ñeijino*

[41] - *ngaran/ñaran* – the object (presenting a flat surface) that...

This demonstrative has no overt spatial suffix so is acting as a relativizer:

dogin engin ngaran e dug kama – because of the wind that hindered us

Table 12: *Simple and Emphatic Forms of Demonstratives for Classifier 30[3], ra.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal	*rane*	*ngarane/ñarane*
Medial	*rana*	*ngarana/ñarana*
Distal	*rano*	*ngarano/ñarano*

[42] – *eben*, indefinite pronoun Classifier 10[15] *ebe*, land.

[43] – *ngabena/ñabena* – that land there.

ngabena/ñabena is composed of *nga/ña* emphatic prefix; *ebe* classifier 10[15]; *(n)a* medial spatial suffix.

Classifier 10[15] is used for plots of land.

Table 13: *Simple and Emphatic Forms of Demonstratives for Classifier 10[15], ebe.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal	*ebene*	*ngabene/ñabene*
Medial	*ebena*	*ngabena/ñabena*
Distal	*ebeno*	*ngabeno/ñabeno*

[44] – *bitune*, the thing here/this thing.

This is the non-emphatic form with the *bi-* prefix.

The *bit* prefix is only found associated with the singular general demonstratives.

As opined in Note [14], *bit* is considered a late form derived from the *mit* prefix. *mit* itself derives through the phonological processes of denasalization from *min* which itself is derived from *min*, thing. As noted in Note [14], the Micronesian[1] language of Satawal has also developed a set of demonstratives based on *min* – thing (see *A sketch Grammar of Satawalese*, p 66,67).

The phonological process is:

min + eune (Augmented Singular General – see Notes [6,19]) > *mitune*

then

mitune > bitune

Table 14: *Simple Singular General Demonstratives with Non-Emphatic min/mit and bit Forms.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Singular General Demonstrative	*min/mit* Form	*bit* Form
Proximal (this here)	*une* *Augmented Form eune*	*mitune (min + eune)*	*bitune*
Medial (that there)	*ia* *No Augmented Form*	*mita (min + ia)*	*bita*
Distal (that yonder)	*uno* *Augmented Form euno*	*mituno (min + euno)*	*bituno*

[45] – *murana*, that object of Classifier 30[3].

murana is composed of Non-Emphatic Prefix *mu/mũ*; Classifier 30[3] *ra* for objects presenting a flat surface or presenting a hollow aspect; *(n)a* medial spatial suffix.

> *mürana wanna bait kabo – that flat object/hollowed object for incense of his [his incense-holder]*

Table 15: *Simple and Non-Emphatic mu/mũ Forms of Demonstratives for Classifier 30[3], ra.*

Degree of Proximity	Simple Demonstrative	Emphatic *nga/ña* Form
Proximal	*rane*	*murane/mũrane*
Medial	*rana*	*murana/mũrana*
Distal	*rano*	*murano/mũrano*

46 – *nat.*

In line with Note [6], the Unrealized Aspect Marker *nan* undergoes denasalization before the verb *ḙagada*, reach; befall; and the weak stress vowel *ḙ* is then deleted:

nan + ḙagada > nat agada

47 – *iot.*

In line with Note [6], the general Indefinite Pronoun *ion* undergoes denasalization before *ḙatsin*, and the weak stress *ḙ* is then deleted:

idũra ion ḙatsin itũrũm – idũra iot atsin itũrũm

48 – *aruwõrien = aruwori/aruwõri* – two times, twice; plus Perfective Aspect Suffix *en*.

This is based on the Classificatory Cardinal Numeral series for Classifier 35[23] *wori/wõri*, number of times.

Table 16: *Cardinal Numerals for Classifier 35[23], wori/wõri.*

Numeral	Cardinal Numerals for Classifier 35[23]
One time, once	aiworin/aiwõrin
Two times, twice	aruwori/aruwõri
Three times, thrice	aiyuwori/aijuwõri
Four times	awori/awõri

Kayser (NG71-74) gives the full forms he recorded, but only the low numbers 1-4 are older fused forms.

49 – *aworin*, the numeral particle for Classifier 35[23].

The numeral particle is used with classifiers to produce classificatory cardinal numerals above four, and with the quantity interrogative *egen*, how many?

The numeral particle is formed in a regular way, after the pattern of the classificatory indefinite pronoun (see Note [8]):

a-
probably the same origin as the definite quantifier prefix *a-* evident on the Cardinal Numeral series.
+
Classifier
+
-n
probably a fossilized construct suffix

The numeral particle of all classifiers undergoes denasalization before *egen?*:

aworin egen > *aworit egen*, how many times?

[50] – *egen*, Interrogative Quantifier .

When requesting information of objects that are covered by the appropriate classifier, the Interrogative Quantifier is preceded by the Numeral Particle:

aworin egen > *aworit egen*, how many times?

[51] – *iaran iaran/ijaran ijaran*.

yaran/ijaran, in the morning; tomorrow.

13. Table of Classifiers

Classifier Number (*Nauru Grammar* Classifier number in brakets)	Classifier form and meaning
1(16)	ae [aʲæ] piece of flat things, patch
2(17)	baño/bango [bʌŋo] part of long object
3(8)	be [be] coconut leaf
4(10)	bõke/boge [bʲəge] body of fresh water
5(11)	bũmi/bumi [bɨmi] night/24 hour day
6(32)	bʷere [bwere] content of basket, basketful
7(19/18)	bwetsi/bweti~ mwetsi/mweti [bweitˢi~bwei3i/ mweitˢi~mwei3i] long flexible objects
8(34)	dume [duume] content of wrapping, package, container
9(20)	ea [eʲæ] fourth part of fish
10(15)	ebe/äbe [ebe] land

11(7)	eiji/eiyi [eʒi] words
12(5)	eo [eʲo] trough-shaped objects
13(12)	ga [gʌ] reef fissures
14(24)	ga [gæ] bundle of drinking-water shells
15(13)	ime [ime] shelters
16(38)	in [ʲiin] content of coconut-fibre wrappings
17(35)	ine [iine] content of leaf-wrappings
18(14)	ire [ire] single hair/feather/leaf/fibre
19(36)	iwi [iwi] contents of fish—nets
20(21)	ke/kä [ke] small part
21(4)	mae [mʲai] long rigid objects
22(25)	mage [mʌge] groups
23(22)	mwari [mʷʌrʰi] larger piece, large part of an object

24(26)	mwe/mwo [mʷə] fruits growing in clusters
25(31)	mweiyi [mʷeiʒi] heaps of excrement
26(27)	ñe/nge [ŋe] kinds, species
27(6)	oe/oä [oʷe] plants, vegetation
28(37)	pañi/pangi [paŋi] content of reef-hollows
29(30)	powi [poʷi] heap, collections
30(3)	ra [rʰæ] objects conceived of as presenting a flat surface
31(28)	re/rä [rre] row, string of objects
32(29)	dete/tete [ɾere] layer, pedigree, generation
33(9)	wa [wa] long flexible parts
34(33)	wime [wiime] content of leaf baskets for small fish
35(23)	wõri/wori [wʌri] number of times
36(39)	wũri/wuri [wɨri] content of open-mouthed receptacle

14. References

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